

Did you know?

Child Support

Federal law prohibits forgiveness of child support debt once it accrues. To get relief, an individual (with no independent resources) must ask the court (file a motion accurately stating the child's name, date of birth, venue in which the order is processed, etc.) to "modify" an order as quickly as possible once incarcerated to reflect that he or she is not earning enough in prison to continue to pay child support. The court order can be "suspended" until release when the court can assess an offender's debts and reinstitute it. However, any child support debt that has accrued up until the date that a correct petition is filed in court cannot be discharged.

Education/Training/Employment

There are **One-Stop Career Centers** in every county in New Jersey. One-Stop Career Centers can help you (1) improve your reading and basic skills, (2) get job training, (3) make career decisions, (4) strengthen your job-search skills (5) find a job, (6) start your own business, and much more.

If you initiate **apprenticeship** agreements while incarcerated they can be continued upon release. Many of the **vocational** programs offer nationally recognized certification upon completion. Completing an OSHA Safety course increases your ability to gain employment upon release.

If you receive your **GED** and misplace your diploma you can contact the Department of Corrections' Office of Educational Services or the Department of Education to obtain an official transcript, as duplicate diplomas are not issued.

Federal Bonding Program

Employers who hire ex-offenders could benefit from the U.S. Department of Labor's Federal Bonding Program. This program allows employers to purchase fidelity bonds to indemnify them for loss of money or property sustained through the dishonest acts of their employees. The bond is given to the employer free-of-charge, and serves as an incentive to the company to hire ex-offenders.

N.J.S.A 2A: 168A-1 Licensing

Notwithstanding the contrary provisions of any law or rule or regulation issued pursuant to law, a person shall not be disqualified or discriminated against by any licensing authority because of any conviction for a crime, unless N.J.S. 2C: 51-2 [Forfeiture of Public Office] is applicable or unless the conviction relates adversely to the occupation, trade, vocation, profession or business for which the license or certificate is sought.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)

The WOTC (P.L. 104-188), is a federal tax credit that encourages employers to hire an ex-felon who is a member of a low income family, reducing employers' federal income tax liability by as much as \$2,400 per qualified new worker; \$750, if working 120 hours or \$1,200, if working 400 hours or more. WOTC applies to new hires that begin work for an employer on or after December 31, 2003 and before January 1, 2006. For more information contact the U.S. Department of Labor WOTC Coordinator.

Non-drivers State Identification

You can still get a non-drivers state identification card even if your driver's license is currently suspended. Contact the Motor Vehicle Commission at 1 (888) 486-3339.

Social Security Benefits

Although you cannot receive monthly Social Security benefit payments while you are confined, your spouse or children can be paid benefits on your record if they are eligible. Social Security disability benefits can be paid to people who have recently worked and paid Social Security taxes and are unable to work because of a serious medical condition that is expected to last at least a year or result in death. Social Security retirement benefits can be paid to people who are 62 or older. Generally, you must have worked and paid Social Security taxes for 10 years to be eligible. SSI payments can be paid to people who are 65 or older, or who are blind or disabled and whose income and resources are below certain limits.

General Assistance or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Welfare)

You may be eligible to receive cash benefits under General Assistance (GA) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) if you completed a licensed drug treatment program in prison and are drug free. Contact the County Board of Social Services.

Veteran's Benefits

If you have a dishonorable discharge from the military, you can appeal and the dishonorable discharge may be overturned. You would then be eligible for veteran's benefits. If you have an honorable discharge from the military, even with a felony conviction, you are entitled to veteran's benefits. Contact the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Medicare & Medicaid

Medicare is the national health insurance program that pays for medical assistance for certain individuals with low incomes and resources who

- (1) are age 65 or older
- (2) are under age 65 with disabilities and
- (3) have End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD)

To be eligible for Medicaid, a person must meet these general requirements:

- (1) resident of New Jersey
- (2) U.S. Citizen or qualified alien, and
- (3) meet specific standards for financial income and resources

In addition, a person must fall into one of the following categories:

- (1) families with children up to age 18
- (2) people who are aged, blind or permanently disabled
- (3) pregnant women or children

Contact the County Board of Social Services for Medicaid and 1 (800) 633-4227 for Medicare.

Voting Rights

You must register to vote before you can go to the polls.

You can register to vote if you meet the following qualifications:

(1) United States citizen; (2) at least 18 years of age on election day; (3) New Jersey resident at least 30 days before the election; (4) not in prison, on probation or parole because of a felony conviction; (5) registered to vote at least 29 days before the election and (6) you have not been declared by a court to be mentally incompetent.

How and where to register

The Commissioners of Registration cannot accept faxed copies or an electronic transmission of a voter registration form since an original signature is required. If you register to vote by mail for the first time in your county, you will have to provide some form of identification.

Where to get registration applications

(1) Division of Elections (2) Commissioner of Registration office in the County where you live (3) your Municipal Clerk or online at www.NJELECTIONS.org. You can also register when you apply for services at a Motor Vehicle Commission Agency and other state agencies that provide public assistance.

Submitting your voter registration application

- Your voter registration application must go to your County Commissioner of Registration. It is postage paid so it does not cost anything to mail it.
- You can also drop it off at the commissioner's office or your Municipal Clerk's Office.
- It must be received by a voter registration agency by the 29th day before the election.

You must re-register if:

You change your name.

You change your residence

Identification (ID) requirements

You can only be asked to provide ID at the polling place if:

- you are a first time registrant by mail in your county after January 1, 2003 and you did not provide ID before going to vote in the polling place or
- You are being properly challenged.

Note: Only the board workers can ask you for ID.

Where to vote

As a registered voter, you will be sent a sample ballot before every election. The sample ballot will tell you where you are to go to vote.

Acceptable current and valid photo ID:

(1) New Jersey driver's license; (2) United States passport; (3) military or other government ID; (4) student or job ID; (5) store membership ID or (6) any document with your name and address, e.g. bank statement, car registration, government check or document, rent receipt, utility bill, any other official document.

N.J.S.A. 10A: 70-8 Certificate of Good Conduct

The certificate of good conduct is a document issued by the State Parole Board to assist the rehabilitation of convicted offenders by removing impediments and restrictions upon their ability to obtain a proposed employment. This certificate does not imply pardon and under no circumstances is it to be construed as forgiving, absolving or mitigating the offense (s). Issuance of a certificate of good conduct pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2A: 168A-1 et seq. Precludes a licensing authority, as defined in N.J.S.A.2A: 168A-2, from disqualifying or discriminating against the applicant because of any conviction for a crime, unless N.J.S.A. 2A: 93-5 is applicable. An application for a certificate of good conduct shall not be entertained unless the applicant

(1) was previously paroled by the State Parole Board; (2) at least two years have passed since the date any similar application was denied, unless the State Parole Board determines that significant information exists which provides a basis for a waiver of this limitation. The applicant must apply to the State Parole Board for a certificate using forms provided by the State Parole Board.

N.J.A.C. 10A: 71-6.9 Discharge from Parole

The appropriate Board panel may grant any parolee a complete discharge from parole prior to the expiration of the maximum term for which he or she was sentenced, provided that: such parolee has made a satisfactory adjustment while on parole; and Continued supervision is not required; (2) The parolee has made full payment of any assessment, fine, penalty, lab fee or restitution or the parolee has in good faith established a satisfactory payment schedule; or (3) In the opinion of the Board panel continued supervision is not warranted or appropriate based upon a review of the facts and circumstances. If discharge is granted, the appropriate Board panel shall issue a discharge certificate.

N.J.S.A. 2C: 52-1, 52-2 Expungement

The purpose of the expungement statute is to provide relief to a one-time offender and allow him or her to carry on as if criminal proceedings had never occurred. However, records of conviction for the certain offenses shall not be subject to expungement. The applicant must present a duly verified petition as provided in N.J.S.A. 2C: 52-7 to the Superior Court in the county in which the conviction was entered praying that such conviction and all records and information pertaining thereto be expunged.

One Stop Career Centers
1 (877) 872-5627

Department of Education
(609) 292-4469

Department of Corrections
Office of Educational Services
(609) 292-8054

Social Security Administration
1 (800) 772-1213

State Parole Board
(609) 292-4257

Department of Veterans Affairs
1 (800) 827-1000

New Jersey Division of Elections
1 (877) NJ-VOTER

American Civil Liberties Union
1 (973) 642-2084